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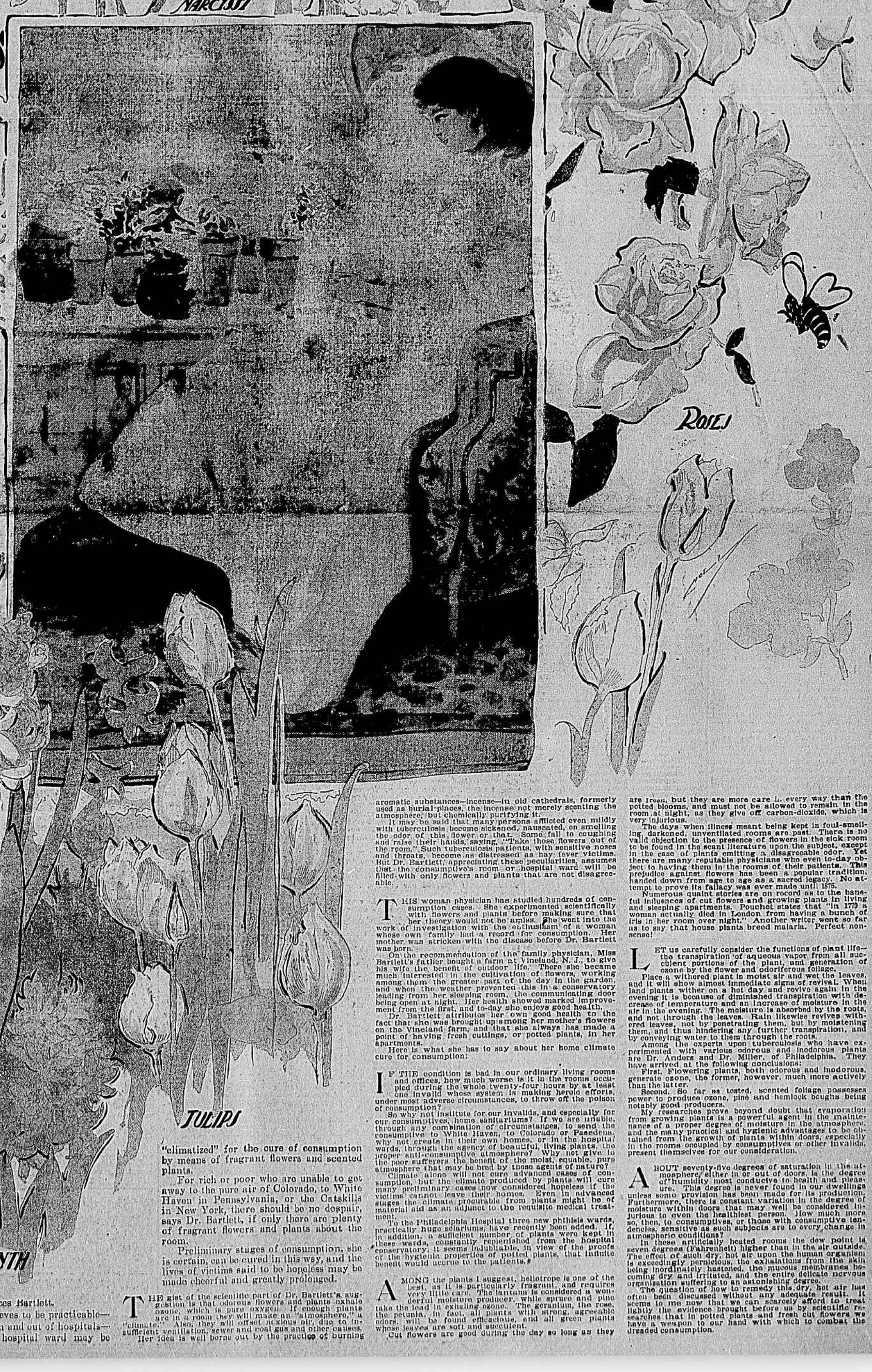
Mountain Air For Consumptives Furnished By Flowers In The Home

Plenty of Fragrant Blossoms, Scientifically Selected, Believed by a Woman Physician to be a Cure for the Dread Disease



DR. H. FRANCES BARTLETT

AMONG all the latter-day remedies for consumption there is none so simple and inexpensive, so uniquely commonplace, as that just prescribed by a well known woman physician of Philadelphia—Dr. H. Frances Bartlett.

Her idea, which she believes to be practicable—after years of observation in and out of hospitals—is that a living room or hospital ward may be "climatized" for the cure of consumption by means of fragrant flowers and scented plants.

For rich or poor who are unable to get away to the pure air of Colorado, to White Haven in Pennsylvania, or the Catskills in New York, there should be no despair, says Dr. Bartlett, if only there are plenty of fragrant flowers and plants about the room.

Preliminary stages of consumption, she is certain, can be cured in this way, and the lives of victims said to be hopeless may be made cheerful and greatly prolonged.

THE gist of the scientific part of Dr. Bartlett's suggestion is that odorous flowers and plants exhale ozone, which is pure oxygen. If enough plants are in a room they will make an "atmosphere," a "climate." Also, they will offset noxious air, due to insufficient ventilation, sewer and coal gas and other causes.

Her idea is well borne out by the practice of burning aromatic substances—incense—in old cathedrals, formerly used as burial places, the incense not merely scenting the atmosphere, but chemically purifying it.

It may be said that many persons afflicted even mildly with tuberculosis become sickened, nauseated, on smelling the odor of this flower or that. Some fall to coughing and raise their hands, saying, "Take those flowers out of the room." Such tuberculosis patients, with sensitive noses and throats, become as distressed as hay fever victims. But Dr. Bartlett, appreciating these peculiarities, assumes that the consumptive's room or hospital ward will be filled with only flowers and plants that are not disagreeable.

THIS woman physician has studied hundreds of consumption cases. She experimented scientifically with flowers and plants before making sure that her theory would not be amiss. She went into the work of investigation with the enthusiasm of a woman whose own family had a record for consumption. Her mother was stricken with the disease before Dr. Bartlett was born.

On the recommendation of the family physician, Miss Bartlett's father bought a farm at Vineland, N. J., to give his wife the benefit of outdoor life. There she became much interested in the cultivation of flowers, working among them the greater part of the day in the garden, and when the weather prevented this in a conservatory leading from her sleeping room, the communicating door being open at night. Her health showed marked improvement from the first, and to-day she enjoys good health.

Dr. Bartlett attributes her own good health to the fact that she was brought up among her mother's flowers on the Vineland farm, and that she always has made a point of having fresh cuttings, or potted plants, in her apartments.

Here is what she has to say about her home climate cure for consumption:

IF THE condition is bad in our ordinary living rooms and offices, how much worse is it in the rooms occupied during the whole twenty-four hours by at least one invalid whose system is making heroic efforts, under most adverse circumstances, to throw off the poison of consumption?

So why not institute for our invalids, and especially for our consumptives, home sanitariums? If we are unable, through any combination of circumstances, to send the consumptive to White Haven, to Colorado or Pasadena, why not create in their own homes, or in the hospital wards, through the agency of beautiful, living plants, the proper anti-consumptive atmosphere? Why not give to the poor sufferers the benefit of the moist, equable, pure atmosphere that may be bred by these agents of nature?

Climate alone will not cure advanced cases of consumption, but the climate produced by plants will cure many preliminary cases now considered hopeless if the victims cannot leave their homes. Even in advanced stages the climate procurable from plants might be of material aid as an adjunct to the requisite medical treatment.

To the Philadelphia Hospital three new phthisis wards, practically huge solariums, have recently been added. If, in addition, a sufficient number of plants were kept in these wards, constantly replenished from the hospital conservatory, it seems indubitable, in view of the proofs of the hygienic properties of potted plants, that infinite benefit would accrue to the patients.

AMONG the plants I suggest, heliotrope is one of the best, as it is particularly fragrant, and requires very little care. The lantana is considered a wonderful moisture producer, while spruce and pine take the lead in exhaling ozone. The geranium, the rose, the petunia, in fact, all plants with strong, agreeable odors, will be found efficacious, and all green plants whose leaves are soft and succulent.

Cut flowers are good during the day so long as they are fresh, but they are more care ful every way than the potted blooms, and must not be allowed to remain in the room at night, as they give off carbon-dioxide, which is very injurious.

The days when illness meant being kept in foul-smelling, darkened, unventilated rooms are past. There is no valid objection to the presence of flowers in the sick room to be found in the scant literature upon the subject, except in the case of plants emitting a disagreeable odor. Yet there are many reputable physicians who even to-day object to having them in the rooms of their patients. This prejudice against flowers has been a popular tradition, handed down from age to age as a sacred legacy. No attempt to prove its fallacy was ever made until 1875.

Numerous quaint stories are on record as to the baneful influences of cut flowers and growing plants in living and sleeping apartments. Pouchet states that "In 1779 a woman actually died in London from having a bunch of iris in her room over night." Another writer went so far as to say that house plants breed malaria. Perfect nonsense!

LET us carefully consider the functions of plant life—the transpiration of aqueous vapor from all succulent portions of the plant, and generation of ozone by the flower and odoriferous foliage.

Place a withered plant in moist air and wet the leaves, and it will show almost immediate signs of revival. When land plants wither on a hot day and revive again in the evening it is because of diminished transpiration with decrease of temperature and an increase of moisture in the air in the evening. The moisture is absorbed by the roots, and not through the leaves. Rain likewise revives withered leaves, not by penetrating them, but by moistening them, and thus hindering any further transpiration, and by conveying water to them through the roots.

Among the experts upon tuberculosis who have experimented with various odorous and inodorous plants are Dr. Anders and Dr. Miller, of Philadelphia. They have arrived at the following conclusions:

First. Flowering plants, both odorous and inodorous, generate ozone, the former, however, much more actively than the latter.

Second. So far as tested, scented foliage possesses power to produce ozone, pine and hemlock boughs being notably good producers.

My researches prove beyond doubt that evaporation from growing plants is a powerful agent in the maintenance of a proper degree of moisture in the atmosphere, and the many practical and hygienic advantages to be obtained from the growth of plants within doors, especially in the rooms occupied by consumptives or other invalids, present themselves for our consideration.

ABOUT seventy-five degrees of saturation in the atmosphere, either in or out of doors, is the degree of humidity most conducive to health and pleasure. This degree is never found in our dwellings unless some provision has been made for its production. Furthermore, there is constant variation in the degree of moisture within doors that may well be considered injurious to even the healthiest person. How much more so, then, to consumptives, or those with consumptive tendencies, sensitive as such subjects are to every change in atmospheric conditions?

In these artificially heated rooms the dew point is seven degrees (Fahrenheit) higher than in the air outside. The effect of such dry, hot air upon the human organism is exceedingly pernicious, the exhalations from the skin being inordinately hastened, the mucous membranes becoming dry and irritated, and the entire delicate nervous organization suffering to an astonishing degree.

The question of how to remedy this dry, hot air has often been discussed without any adequate result. It seems to me now that we can scarcely afford to treat lightly the evidence brought before us by scientific researches that in potted plants and fresh cut flowers we have a weapon to our hand with which to combat the dreaded consumption.